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occurred sometimes included cloudy days, so that the dates of increase are those on which the change was first detected at its highest stage. The greatest decline of the *Nova* was to 6.5 magnitude, on the 22d of April.

SAN FRANCISCO, May 31, 1901.

COMET HOLK.

By EDGAR L. LARKIN.

The Australian comet, discovered by HOLK, April 23d, was well observed at the Mount Lowe Observatory to-night, May 17, 1901, at $7^h\ 38^m$. Its approximate position then was:—

$$\alpha\ \ 5^h\ 50^m\ 30^s$$
$$\delta\ +4^\circ\ 46'$$

The nucleus was small, but bright and distinct in the brilliant twilight, and had the appearance, nearly as could be judged, of a 4th-magnitude, orange-colored star. The tail was about five minutes in length and quite wide. A fog has rested upon the summits of Tujunga and Verdugo Mountains for six days. These ranges constitute the western horizon here, and the comet could not have been seen before. Professor KREUTZ'S ephemeris was used. The visitor was seen at $7^h\ 38^m$, and disappeared behind the peaks at $8^h\ 13^m$, thus affording only thirty-five minutes for observation. The tail was so faint that it could not be seen in the high power of the micrometer, so it was not measured,— the apparent length being an estimate with low power, 132 Gundlach periscopic. No attempt was made to secure a spectrum, owing to the short time available, and it is doubtful if a spectrum could have been seen in the twilight glow, and still more a subject of doubt whether it would possess value if obtained, owing to vapors round about the mountain tops.

The comet's motion was rapid and could be easily seen in the short time the display was on. There were no catalogue-stars in field. If the comet had been at high altitude, it is probable that the tail would have been as much as one degree in length. The celestial wanderer was almost invisible in the finder, but the nucleus was clearly seen in the 16-inch, while the tail was brighter than thought possible in the glimmer of solar rays and the glow of the Zodiacal Light. And this glowing cone of light is far more brilliant here than at any observatory in the Eastern States.

Altogether the observation seems to have been quite satisfactory under the existing conditions.

MOUNT LOWE (CAL.) OBSERVATORY, May 17, 1901.

PLANETARY PHENOMENA FOR JULY AND AUGUST, 1901.

BY MALCOLM MCNEILL.

JULY.

The Earth is in aphelion July 4, 8 A.M. P. S. T.

Mercury is an evening star at the beginning of the month, too near the Sun to be seen. It rapidly approaches the Sun, passes inferior conjunction on the morning of July 13th, and then rapidly recedes from the Sun. It may be seen as a morning star during the last few days of the month in the early twilight.

Venus is gradually increasing its distance from the Sun, and is beginning to be conspicuous as an evening star. During most of the month it sets rather more than an hour after sunset. It moves about 40° east and 11° south through *Cancer* into *Leo*. On July 28th it passes about 1° north of *Regulus*.

Mars is in the western sky in the evening, setting a little before 10 P.M. at the end of the month. Its rate of recession from the Earth is still over twenty millions of miles per month, and on July 31st its distance from us is about one hundred and sixty-three millions of miles. Its apparent motion among the stars is 16° east and 7° south from *Leo* into *Virgo*. On the evening of July 6th it passes very close, less than 20′, south of the fifth-magnitude star *β Virginis*.

Jupiter and *Saturn* are still close together in *Sagittarius*, and as they are both near opposition, they are above the horizon practically the entire night. *Jupiter* was in opposition on June 30th, and *Saturn* will be in opposition on July 5th. Both are moving westward. *Jupiter* not quite 4° and *Saturn* rather more than 2°, and at the end of the month are about 7° apart, *Jupiter* being west of *Saturn*.

Uranus is about two hours' motion west of *Saturn*, and sets two hours earlier. It is still in the southern extension of *Ophiuchus*,